
ATTENTION OF:
All Louisiana Low Income Home Energy
Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Providers

NOTICE: LHP-2021-03

ISSUED: July 21, 2021

This notice remains in effect until amended,
superseded, or rescinded

SUBJECT: Louisiana LIHEAP American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) Supplemental Funding

On May 4, 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Community Services (OCS), Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) released \$41,415,195 in supplemental funding for the State of Louisiana's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

Congress appropriated these funds under the *American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) of 2021 (Public Law 117-2)*, signed into law on March 11, 2021. This act provided \$4.5 billion "for additional funding to provide payments" for LIHEAP.

Effective July 21, 2021, the federal FY 2021 Louisiana LIHEAP Agreement is being amended to add these additional funds to the local Subgrantee Agreements. This Notice hereby supplements the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide in regards to how to qualify applicants and disburse the ARP Supplemental funds.

Subgrantees must expend ARP Supplemental funds by June 30, 2022 to avoid any risk of loss of funds.

Expiration of Notice LHP-2021-02

On May 31, 2021, Notice LHP-2021-02 expired which allowed for the temporary expansion of the Louisiana LIHEAP Crisis Definition and for Past Due financial obligations to be paid in addition to disconnects using the regular Crisis benefit matrix.

Effective June 1, 2021, clients may only qualify for FY2021 Crisis (regular funds) in the event of a disconnect or threat of disconnect. All regular Crisis rules remain in effect.

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ARP Benefit Determination

Per Section 4.9 of the FY2021 Louisiana LIHEAP Model Plan:

In the event that Supplemental funds are granted or available within the year due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e. public health emergencies, etc.), LHC reserves the right to develop a separate benefit matrix to deliver bill payment assistance that meets the need of the particular crisis based on the amount of funds awarded or still available. Applicants impacted by the crisis will be eligible for Supplemental funds in addition to eligibility for regular crisis assistance.

The ARP Supplemental funding is an additional Crisis funding allocation and should be treated separately from the regular Crisis funding with the rules stated in this Notice. Benefits will be used to assist in eliminating utility arrearages exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 public health emergency.

A household will be eligible for **up to a maximum \$1200 supplemental benefit** to pay Past Due balances/arrearages, in addition to any other LIHEAP funds for which the household may qualify.

Clients are eligible for one ARP Supplemental benefit in addition to one benefit from each allocation. While the regular LIHEAP allocations have a prescribed utility vendor that must be paid, the ARP Supplemental funding may be split between a heating and cooling utility vendor if a Past Due balance/arrearage exists with **both** vendors.

Although this is a crisis payment, the ARP Supplemental benefit does not have to eliminate the arrearage, and the client does not have to show proof of payment for remaining balances. The client will only receive \$1200 in the event the Past Due balance/arrearage **exceeds** the maximum supplemental benefit. Clients who have Past Due balances/arrearages less than \$1200 will receive a benefit **equal to** the Past Due amount owed.

In the event that a client is on an installment/payment plan, the utility vendor **must** be able to apply the benefit directly to the Past Due balance/arrearage only. This may require contacting the utility vendor to turn off the installment/payment plan. The ARP Supplemental funding may **not** be applied to current charges and amounts due. In the event of an installment/payment plan, the Subgrantee must verify that the payment is applied correctly.

Income Eligibility

All previous LIHEAP income eligibility requirements still apply. This includes the LIHEAP Income Eligibility Limits for FFY2021 – Louisiana released on November 23, 2020 in Notice LHP-2020-03.

Per LIHEAP DCL 2021-05, LIHEAP Grantees and Subgrantees should **not** consider the economic impact payments from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as income for eligibility. These payments count as rebates or advance payments of a credit that are **exempt** from consideration as income.

Per LIHEAP DCL 2021-05, State Grantees retain the authority under the federal LIHEAP statute to define “income” for the purpose of determining income eligibility for the program. This includes whether to include or exclude supplemental unemployment compensation payments from the LIHEAP income eligibility calculation. If a Grantee rule allows it, a Grantee may treat these supplemental payments differently than the regular Unemployment Insurance Benefits. Louisiana has chosen to **exclude** these payments. The regular State Unemployment Insurance Benefits must still be counted as income.

Intake

When a client presents with a shut-off or disconnect notice, a Subgrantee must still provide assistance within 48 hours for non-life threatening crisis and within 18 hours for life-threatening crisis.

When a client presents with a Past Due amount only and no disconnect notice, Subgrantees must provide assistance on a first come, first serve basis in accordance with existing intake/scheduling policies for non-crisis appointments.

Utility Allowances

Per the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide, clients who receive a utility allowance as a form of additional utility assistance for being on a rental assistance program, such as Section 8, must have the utility allowance deducted before receiving a regular LIHEAP benefit. This remains in effect for the regular LIHEAP allocations.

This utility allowance will **not** apply to the ARP Supplemental benefit. If the client is a renter who receives a utility allowance, the Hancock Software utility allowance field should be left blank for the 2021 ARP Supplemental.

Documentation

Proof of COVID-19 hardship is **not required** to receive the ARP Supplemental benefit. Since the ARP Supplemental benefit is for Past Due balances/arrearages, the client must provide a utility statement dated **within the past 30 days** showing a Past Due (or installment for Past Due) amount. The Subgrantee must be able to verify the total Past Due amount in order to maximize the benefit the client is eligible for. This may include a supplemental print out from a vendor portal or documentation from a utility vendor.

All other previous LIHEAP documentation requirements still apply.

This Notice hereby supplements the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide for the allocation defined.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact the LHC Energy Assistance Department at E4@lhc.la.gov or Lauren Holmes at lhartley@lhc.la.gov.

Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC)
Energy Assistance